We are pleased to present the inaugural issue of the Monday Dose, a monthly professional development newsletter written by students for students. Every issue will feature an article about a professional development topic, as well as motivational quotes and thoughts from our professors. This month’s professional development topic is about “Trust and Communication.” The “Ask the Professor” question is about “Persistence.” Hope you enjoy it!

We can always learn from others if only we are willing to open our eyes, our ears and our minds, so here are some insights for you to ponder should you so desire.

“A Quote for Your Thoughts”

“Nothing in the world can take the place of PERSISTENCE... Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan “Press On” has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race.”

- Calvin Coolidge
“Ask the Professors”

is a monthly project that asks our professors poignant questions that they answer anonymously, so here is the question and their answers.

**Question:** Can you identify and elaborate on a part of your life where you’ve demonstrated a pattern of long-term persistence that has resulted in successfully reaching a goal?

**Answers:**  

A Difficult Decision Pays Off Through Persistence

It was spring 1990 when the civil war forced the shutdown of the East campus of the American University of Beirut. What does a junior college student do in face of this reality? Perhaps give up her dream of graduating from the AUB and transfer her credits to another college? Take a break from college to enjoy the warmth of home? Or maybe she can do the unthinkable and relocate to the West campus of the AUB, under gunfire, and the risk of not being able to return home because of the East/West city divide? Obviously, she chose the latter. Away from home, not knowing if and when she can return and see her family, and with very limited financial resources, she graduated with her bachelor’s degree a year later, and by 1993, had her MPH degree in one hand, and her acceptance into the PhD program in the other hand.

While this is not a common story, the message is universal. When finishing that degree seems impossible, because of work demands, family needs, health issues, or whatever the reason may be, please persist because persistence does pay off! Give it a try -- it's pretty cool and you have my word: You won't regret it!
**Long Term Dedication and Persistence**

My entire research work is about persistence. For example, if you can have the patience and dedication to work on a book for about 4 years, I think there is nothing that demonstrates persistence more than that!

**A Small Sacrifice Pays Off Through Persistence**

One example would be the completion of my Ph.D. program. While my academic work was both exciting and important to me, the demands of family and work life were often at odds with my academic goals for completion. Coursework was less of an issue because the semester deadlines kept my work in check, but the less structured process of writing my dissertation was often sacrificed to other demands. Long-term persistence was definitely required, as I knew that I didn't want to end up ABD (all but dissertation), as do a surprising number of doctoral students each year. I had several periods where I needed to refocus my efforts and reallocate my time/energy to this task. I will never forget waking up one Saturday morning to the realization that my work at the hospital was yet again consuming me and I had not worked on my dissertation for over 3 months. That literal ‘wake-up call’ prompted me to dig in and get the task done. The feeling of accomplishment in earning my Ph.D. more than accounted for the sacrifice that was necessary to get there. For me it is a reminder that it is easy to get caught up in life’s challenges but that hard work, dedication, and persistence pay big dividends in the end.
We study about the effects of cost containment and effective planning; we learn about policy and community health; we learn about risk assessment and about public health law. We take classes and study until our eyes burn so that we are prepared for the next step whatever that may turn out to be.

In the field and in our careers, we must handle many activities, such as understanding and implementing policy regulations, ensuring all capital is utilized efficiently and budgets are on track, managing human resources, planning operations, and others.

Do you know what two key necessities are sometimes neglected but affect all managerial functions and can truly make or break an organization?

TRUST & COMMUNICATION!

Yep, in order effectively apply our knowledge and skills, there must be communication alignment and a sense of trust between executives and clinicians. Otherwise, success will be a struggle, and performance will suffer.

As public health leaders, it is our responsibility to arm ourselves with the tools to create the atmosphere of alignment and trust between clinicians and administrators, so that all other aspects of running a successful organization have a fighting chance to work.

I have researched this topic and put together some interesting insights and “how-to” ideas to help you have a leg up before you enter the workplace. ENJOY!
Much like Charlie Brown and Lucy, Administrators and Physicians constantly battle with issues relating to the lack of **TRUST and COMMUNICATION**.

What are the issues if trust and communication aren’t present?

- Patient safety is compromised
- Quality of care decreases
- Employee morale problems arise
- Cost-containment issues increase
- Physician’s perceived devaluation of their services and time
- Administrators perceived devaluation of their services and time
- Lack of physician loyalty to the organization
- Physicians feel powerless to influence important decisions
- Lack of buy-in for implementing important decisions
- Misunderstandings and unresolved conflicts are rampant

So, if building trust and communication is key... **HOW DO WE DO IT?**
Why is communication & trust an issue?

- Differences in training
- Physicians commonly lack training in communication, negotiation, & conflict resolution.
- Physicians do not feel heard or that they have a voice

Common differences in thinking and vocabulary such as:

**Time Frame:**
- Physicians look at the right now or take an immediate action in regards to patients need.
- Administrators see time frame as possibly weeks, months or years before their projects or goals are completed.

**Team orientation:**
- Physicians see “team” as individual contributions to a whole. They only focus on what they are doing individually.
- Administrators see “team” as interdependent and collaborative. They understand that everyone must work together to achieve a goal.

**Control:**
- Physicians see “control” as managing themselves, processes and people that relate to the physician’s productivity.
- Administrators see “control” as dealing with assets like property & equipment.

Two different definitions can create major conflict!

**How do we bridge this communication gap?**

Bridging the Gap
M.A.P. (Medical Advisory Panel)

- M.A.P. focuses on a **structured dialogue** between administrators and physicians.
- Face-to-face communication creates understanding and commonality for reaching agreed upon goals.
- **Structured dialogue** allows for physicians voices to be heard and ideas implemented by the administration.
- Physicians begin to think and act as owners because they see their recommendations being acted upon.
  - For more info go to: [www.healthcarecollaboration.com](http://www.healthcarecollaboration.com)

**Physician-hospital alignment triangle**

- Based on three parts: clinical, economic and purpose
- Measures these three parts through a diagnostic process

  **Recommends structured dialogue for improved communication & trust through:**
  
  - Town hall forums and retreats
  - Physician advisory councils
  - Direct physician leadership
  - You can go to [www.PhysicianHospitalAlignment.com](http://www.PhysicianHospitalAlignment.com) for a free version of the diagnostic tool
What can you do to prepare yourself?

Building communication & trust starts with you!

Develop your interpersonal communication skills now!

- Become more aware of how you currently communicate so you will know where to start.
- Read these two books:
  - *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie
  - *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In* by Roger Fischer & William Ury
- Research online about the topics of communication, negotiation and conflict resolution!
- Practice! Practice! Practice!

**Anything worthwhile, takes a while**

**So be both patient and persistent!**